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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by the American Cancer Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

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Statement*

1. The American Cancer Society (ACS) is a leader in the global cancer control movement, addressing the growing global cancer and tobacco burden through a variety of programmes and initiatives throughout the world, including Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The mission of the American Cancer Society is to eliminate cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer.

2. ACS is an NGO partner of the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance (NCD Alliance), the group formed by the international federations (Union for International Cancer Control, International Diabetes Federation, World Heart Federation and International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease) representing the four main diseases outlined in the WHO 2008-2013 NCD Action Plan of the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. The American Cancer Society is also the secretariat for Cervical Cancer Action, a global coalition to stop cervical cancer.

3. **Acknowledging that**:

- The fifty-first session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments, the relevant United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to "take all necessary measures to ensure the rights of girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and develop sustainable health systems and social services, ensuring access to such systems and services without discrimination".

4. **Considering that**:

- Improved health care is a key pillar of global actions to combat poverty and address discrimination of women and girls. Strengthened health-care systems can ameliorate gender health disparities, empower women socio-economically, and promote women's participation in development policies.
- NCDs (cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease) are responsible for 60 per cent of the world's deaths, 80 per cent of which occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- Despite being responsible for 60 per cent of the world's deaths, the proportion of overall global development assistance for health invested in NCDs is less than 3 per cent.
- Cancer and NCDs are gender equity issues: NCDs are among the top two leading causes of death among women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), with death rates from NCDs among women in Africa being twice as high as in high-income countries.
- The main common risk factors for NCDs are modifiable, namely unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and use of tobacco and alcohol.
- Tobacco use is associated with 30 per cent of all cancer deaths in developing countries (including deaths from cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, and stomach).

* Issued without formal editing.

- Women currently comprise about 20 per cent of the world's smokers, but the tobacco industry is aggressively marketing their products to women and girls in high population countries. Prevalence of tobacco use among women is increasing at an alarming rate as the tobacco industry is increasingly targeting young women and girls in low- and middle-income countries. Without continued action to reduce smoking, deaths among women aged 20 years and over will rise from 1.5 million in 2004 to 2.5 million by 2030; almost 75 per cent of these projected deaths will occur in low- and middle-income countries.

- Efforts to reduce smoking will result in fewer deaths and less disease from lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic respiratory disease and other conditions.

- Cervical cancer, a disease caused by infection with some types of the human papillomavirus (HPV), affects half a million women globally every year.

- Cervical cancer accounted for 275,000 deaths worldwide in 2008 with 88 per cent occurring in less developed countries due to gross disparities in access to screening and treatment.

- HPV vaccines that protect girls and young women against high-risk types of HPV have the potential to significantly reduce the burden of cervical cancer around the world, improve reproductive health, and save millions of women's lives.

- Women are typically the primary guardians of family health and well-being. Improved prevention and care of NCDs can considerably alleviate the disproportionate burden borne by women and girls as the primary caretakers of the chronically ill, thereby helping to address a significant social and economic barrier for women.

- Internationally, cancer NGOs, particularly those focused on women's cancers, have been critical in raising awareness of and commitment to the promotion and protection of women's rights and have been ardent proponents of educating women as a means to empower them in individual patient-provider contexts and in policymaking processes.

- United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/265 calls for a General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011), offering an unparalleled opportunity to address these diseases and reduce their impact on women and girls.

5. **We call for**:

- The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Member States and NGOs to incorporate and embrace NCD control in its recommendations to improve the status of women and in addressing gender inequities.

- Governments to prioritize cervical cancer in their national development and health programmes and ensure that the necessary political and financial commitments are made and sustained.

- Governments to ensure adequate and affordable breast cancer early detection and treatment.

- Multilateral agencies to provide leadership and maximize their contribution to the necessary processes, including rapid pre-qualification that will ensure widespread availability of HPV vaccines.
- Governments ratify and implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control so that the girl child can grow up free from the influence of the tobacco industry.
- United Nations Member States to ensure their Heads of State or Government attend the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011), and ensure there is integration of gender perspectives at the meeting.
- United Nations Member States to ensure the General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (September 2011) covers the full spectrum of issues raised by NCDs — prevention, early detection, access to essential medicines and technologies, treatment and care and the health systems to deliver this in an equitable manner.
- The General Assembly high-level meeting on NCDs to offer all parties the opportunity to change the way these diseases, and their associated risk factors, are viewed and addressed around the world. We believe that at a minimum, the high-level meeting should conclude that:
  - Governments should be accountable and measured on NCD plans.
  - The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control should be fully implemented by all countries.
  - Member States should give a commitment to prevent the preventable.
  - Globally agreed approaches to NCD treatment and care should be implemented.
  - Resources should be made available to deliver global NCD interventions in all countries.
  - NCDs should be specifically included in the successor goals to the MDGs and their role on achieving the MDGs recognized now.